United States Department of Agriculture **Forest Service** **Ouachita National Forest Mena Ranger District** **1603 Highway 71 N Mena, AR 71953**

File Code: 1950 **Date:** August 3, 2009

Route To: (1950)

Subject: Public Comment for Habitat Improvement and Fuel Reduction Prescribed Burning – Mena and Oden Ranger Districts

To: National Forest Stakeholder

Dear National Forest Stakeholder:

The Mena and Oden Ranger Districts' interdisciplinary (ID) team has reviewed existing conditions for fifty-one individual stands in seven compartments (Figure 1) and identified opportunities to transition toward desired conditions described in, and adopted by the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Ouachita National Forest (Revised Forest Plan). Five areas totaling 1,956 acres within compartments 750, 802, 808, 834, 835, 914, and 1124 were identified by the interdisciplinary team in July 2009 for prescribed burning for habitat improvement and fuel reduction (Enclosure 1). Also available at Ouachita National Forest web page are more detailed maps showing boundaries of the prescribed burns (http://www.southernregion.fs.fed.us/ouachita/projects).

The Revised Forest Plan provides primary direction for all management activities and contains the *Vision, Strategy and Standards* for guiding all natural resource management activities for the Ouachita National Forest. The proposed treatment areas include five Management Areas (MAs): MA 9 (Water and Riparian Communities), MA 14 (Ouachita Mountains – Habitat Diversity Emphasis), MA 20 (Wild and Scenic River Corridor), MA 21 (Old Growth Restoration), and MA 22 (Renewal of Shortleaf Pine-Bluestem Grass Ecosystem and Red Cockaded Woodpecker Habitat).

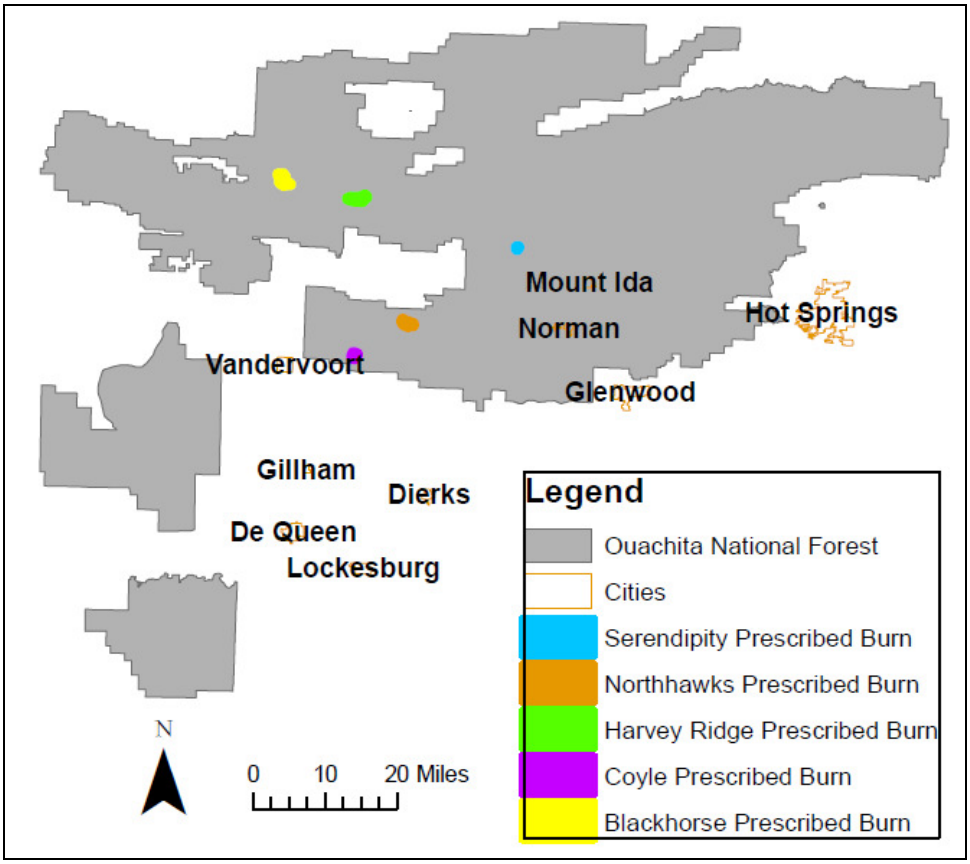
Summaries of desired conditions for each individual MA within the proposed treatment areas, and relevant Ouachita National Forest program priorities and objectives are included in Enclosure 2. Identified desired conditions and objectives are addressed, wholly or partially, within the context of this proposal for habitat improvement and fuel reduction prescribed burning.

PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED BY PROPOSED ACTIVITIES:

Air Quality – The project includes 5 burn units ranging in size from 23 to 671 acres for a total of 1,956 acres. Burn units would be designed to mitigate smoke, as well as to strategically take advantage of road systems and natural barriers to reduce the need to construct control lines. The Class I Caney Creek Wilderness is from 2 to 26 miles from the prescribed burn areas, and the smoke sensitive Black Fork Wilderness is about 2 to 31 miles from the prescribed burn areas. Other smoke sensitive targets identified for the project are the communities of Mena, Fort Smith and Russellville, Arkansas.

Water Resources and Quality – The prescribed burn areas are located within portions of five 6th level watersheds (10,000 to 40,000 acres). Possible cumulative effects of management activities on water quality and its associated beneficial uses will be addressed and analyzed.

Figure 1. Location of proposed habitat improvement and fuel reduction prescribed burning activities.



Wildfire Hazards and/or Fuels - The historic fire regime for the project areas was one of natural (historic) fire occurrence and the risk of losing key ecosystem components to wildland fire was historically low. The fire return interval (frequency) was between 0 and 35 years. Overall, the fire regime condition class (FRCC) within the project area has been significantly altered from the historical range and risk of losing key ecosystem components is currently high. No National Forest System lands within the proposed prescribed burn areas have intact fire regimes (FRCC 1). The fuel loading is approximately 10.5 tons per acre on average, which is approximately 6-7 tons above target. This has limited the amount of open understories necessary for wildlife foods, reduced natural regeneration of pine and oak and restricted the availability of suitable habitat conditions for plants adapted to fire.

There were approximately 7,575 acres of prescribed burning between 1970 and 2009 in Compartments 750, 802, 808, 834, 835, 914, and 1124.

Biological Diversity (wildlife, fish, plants and ecological communities) – Potential effects on Proposed, Endangered, Threatened and Sensitive (PETS) species or their habitat, and Management Indicator Species (MIS) within and near the proposed prescribed burn areas will be evaluated.

Opportunity for Public Involvement

This project is subject to a formal notice and comment period pursuant to 65 Federal Register 61302 (October 17, 2000). Comments must be postmarked or received within 30 days beginning the day after publication of this notice in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*. Written comments should be sent to: District Ranger Jim E. Zornes, Mena and Oden Ranger Districts, Ouachita National Forest, Attn: Habitat Improvement and Fuel Reduction Prescribed Burning. Oral or hand-delivered comments may be made at the Mena Ranger District office at 1603 Highway 71 North within the normal weekday business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Comments may also be mailed electronically to the Mena Ranger District office, in a common digital format (without attachments), using the following email address: comments-southern-ouachita-mena-oden@fs.fed.us. Only individuals or organizations that provide comments or otherwise express interest during the comment period will be eligible to appeal. Include your name, address, and your signature or other means of identification. For organizations, a signature or other means of identification verification must be provided for the individual authorized to represent your organization.

We invite you to participate in the development of these opportunities, including identification of additional activities you would like to see proposed for these areas, any environmental issues associated with implementation of these activities and alternative ways to meet the Revised Forest Plan objectives and desired conditions. Use the comment form, or call Adam Strothers at the Mena Ranger District office. The office phone number is (479) 394-2382. Your involvement will enable us to better assess concerns of the public.

Thank you for your participation in the management of the Ouachita National Forest, and, particularly, the Mena and Oden Ranger Districts.

JIM E. ZORNES
District Ranger

Enclosures

Enclosure 1

OPPORTUNITIES

The ID team identified the following activities which would in-part move the treatment areas toward the desired conditions described in and adopted by the Revised Forest Plan, and would in-part help meet objectives established in the Revised Forest Plan.

ACTIVITY	APPROXIMATE NET MEASURE	IMPLEMENTATION YEAR RANGE
Habitat Improvement and Fuel Reduction Prescribed Burning	1,956 acres	2010-∞
Fireline Construction	0.5 miles	2010-2011
Fireline Reconstruction	4 miles	2010-∞

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Prescribed burning is a key management tool to achieve improved Fire Regimes and Condition Classes for National Forest lands. Each burn unit will be treated with controlled broadcast fire approximately every 1 to 5 years. This recurring schedule will be on a continuous basis and extend indefinitely. Both dormant season and growing season prescribed burning was proposed.

Growing Season Prescribed Burning

Prescribed burning involves application of controlled, moderate to high intensity fire to control competing vegetation (e.g., hardwoods), prepare sites for seeding, and perpetuate fire dependent species (e.g., shortleaf pine). Other added benefits would include reducing accumulated fuels, stimulating growth of native vegetation, and improving wildlife habitat. These burns are implemented during the time between leaf emergence and leaf fall. Vegetation three inches and less in diameter at the ground level would be targeted for higher rootstock eradication. This will result in less competition for pine seedlings and other desirable fire dependant species, while creating an open understory, stimulating growth of native grasses and forbs, and increasing foraging for browsing animals.

Prescribed burning would maintain 10-20 percent of hard mast producers.

Dormant Season Prescribed Burning

Prescribed burning involves application of controlled, low intensity fire to reduce accumulated fuels, stimulate growth of native vegetation, and improve wildlife habitat. There would be approximately 80 percent coverage in areas to be burned, with expected fuel reduction of approximately 30 percent. Some duff would be retained for soil protection. Vegetation 1¼ inches in diameter at breast height (dbh) and less would be

targeted for reduction to create an open understory, stimulating growth of native grasses and forbs, and increasing foraging for browsing animals.

Prescribed burning would maintain 10-20 percent of hard mast producers.

Fireline Construction

Fireline would be constructed to contain the prescribed burns. Fireline would be waterbarred and seeded after use to control erosion and provide temporary linear openings for wildlife.

Fireline Reconstruction

Existing fireline or temporary road construction prisms would be reconstructed to contain the prescribed burns. Fireline would be waterbarred and seeded after use to control erosion and provide temporary linear openings for wildlife.

Enclosure 2

Revised Forest Plan – Management Area Direction

MANAGEMENT AREA 14

Ouachita Mountains – Habitat Diversity Emphasis

This MA consists of extensive blocks of upland (non-riparian) forest located throughout the Ouachita Mountains. The primary community types, each of which also occur in other MAs, are Ouachita Pine-Oak Forest; Ouachita Pine-Oak Woodland; Ouachita Pine-Bluestem Woodland (with Red-Cockaded woodpeckers); and Ouachita Dry-Mesic Oak Forest (NatureServe). The Ouachita Mountains-Habitat Diversity Emphasis MA includes all National Forest System lands in the Ouachita Mountains not assigned to special areas. These lands are available for varied intensities of ecosystem management and roaded-natural recreational opportunities.

Desired Condition

This MA will be a mosaic of shortleaf pine-hardwood (including pine-dominated, hardwood-dominated, and evenly mixed forests and woodlands). Forest-wide desired conditions by structural class and community are presented in the Vision (Part 1 of the Revised Forest Plan) for these communities. Within this MA, grass-forb and seedling-sapling conditions will be well represented, particularly in the portions suitable for timber management, where they make up at least 6 percent of the landscape. These "early successional" conditions will exist primarily under partial canopies of scattered overstory pines and/or hardwood trees. Mid-successional and mature forests and woodlands will be even more widespread, making up at least 70 percent of the landscape.

Adequate amounts of all forest conditions needed to sustain viable populations of many of the plant and animal species native to the Forest will be available. The habitat needs of other native species with specialized habitat needs will be met in other appropriate MAs. Deer and turkey habitat capability will remain near 2004 levels; habitat capability for prairie warbler, and northern bobwhite, among other indicator species, will be higher than 2004 levels.

Visitors and managers will have access to a moderately extensive transportation system. Visitors will also find non-motorized recreation opportunities available on a seasonal and shifting basis, depending on road closures and the scheduling of resource management activities. The main road system will be well maintained, but visitors may see timber harvest equipment and encounter logging traffic. A portion of the road system will be available for low clearance vehicle travel. Some portions will be designated and available for OHV use. The remainder of the road system will be closed seasonally or long-term.

Recently cut areas with logging slash, stumps, and some areas of disturbed soil will be evident on a short-term and continuing basis, as will be signs of prescribed burning and roadwork. Where such active management activities take place, appropriate scenery management techniques will be practiced.

MANAGEMENT AREA 9

Water and Riparian Communities

The MA consists of Water and Riparian Communities, including streams, rivers and ponds, terrestrial areas with riparian vegetation and terrestrial areas identified as necessary to protect water quality and associated beneficial uses found within the Ouachita Mountains, Arkansas River Valley. MA 9 direction applies wherever streams, riparian areas, ponds appear, except where even more stringent management requirements are in place (e.g., MA 20, Wild and Scenic River Corridors).

Desired Condition

Riparian areas and ponds will have a relatively natural appearance. Permanent roads will be minimized but may occur at designated crossings and designated access points. Water quality will be good to excellent. Aquatic ecosystems function properly and support aquatic biota commensurate with the associated ecoregion. The vegetation consists of native species, and the predominant tree species along most streams will be hardwoods. Suitable ponds are managed for a diversity of sport fishing experiences. Developed recreation sites containing intensively managed lakes and ponds will provide improved visitor access and sport fish populations will be managed for sustained yield. Ponds managed for primitive use and fishing will have limited access but support balanced sport fishing populations.

Movement of fish and other aquatic organisms in otherwise free-flowing perennial streams and other streams vital to the life cycles of federally listed or sensitive species will not be obstructed by road crossings, culverts, or other human-caused obstructions.

MANAGEMENT AREA 20

Wild and Scenic River Corridors and Eligible Wild and Scenic River Corridors

Management Area 20 consists of the corridors of the congressionally designated Cossatot and Little Missouri Wild and Scenic Rivers and approximately ½-mile wide corridors for the Ouachita, forks of the Saline (eastern), Caddo, Glover, and Mountain Fork Rivers. The 16.5-mile segment of the Glover River within the Forest is recommended as an addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System with a classification as "scenic." The remaining rivers are eligible for consideration as components of the National System, but suitability studies are deferred to the respective States due to the very limited extent of National Forest (or other federal) lands within the corridors of these rivers. Management activities and practices will protect the inherent qualities of the rivers that have not been congressionally designated, including their "outstandingly remarkable features." River-related recreational opportunities that are compatible with the outstandingly remarkable features of these rivers and their corridors will be offered. The lands within this MA are unsuitable for timber production. Designated rivers are congressionally withdrawn from mineral activity, and rivers under consideration for designation will have a No Surface Occupancy stipulation applied. Management Area 20 is suitable for livestock grazing subject to management area design criteria. Management Area 20 has been subdivided into three distinct areas: 20a. Designated Wild River Segments; 20b. Scenic River Segments; and 20c. Recreational River Segments. Ouachita River Segment III falls within the project area west of the Hwy 298 bridge. It is eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation as a Recreational River segment.

Desired Condition

A variety of dispersed and developed recreational opportunities are available. Visitors encounter natural landscapes featuring exceptionally scenic, free-flowing mountain rivers. Little evidence of human-caused disturbance are visible, except in the form of a few system roads, prescribed fire, control activities to address pest outbreaks, trails, and river access facilities. Much of the vegetation in the corridor has old-growth characteristics. Signs of natural disturbances may be evident.

MANAGEMENT AREA 21

Old Growth Restoration

Management Area 21 includes 35 separate old growth restoration units, ranging in size from 600 acres to nearly 6,000 acres. The emphasis in this MA is the restoration and perpetuation of pine-grass old growth forests, woodlands and other old growth conditions associated with frequent fire. Inclusions of existing hardwood stands will also be managed for old growth characteristics. Maintenance or restoration of other kinds of old growth forests (including other hardwood-dominated forests), woodlands, and glades will be accomplished in other management areas. See additional discussion of old growth in Appendix D.

Restoration of pine-grass old growth forests and woodlands fills a missing component (an ecological gap) among existing communities of the Ouachita Mountains, created largely by decades of fire suppression and large-scale logging in the 1920s and 1930s. Pine-grass old growth systems will provide habitat for a wide range of wildlife, including both late seral stage species and some open area associates. Portions of this area (replacement stands) are suitable for timber production under long rotations. MA 21 is available for oil and gas exploration and leasing; however, no surface occupancy is allowed in the core area and controlled surface use stipulations apply in the remainder of this management area. MA 21 is suitable for livestock grazing subject to management area design criteria.

Desired Condition

The restoration of pine-grass old growth forests and woodlands is emphasized within MA 21, with the perpetuation of old growth conditions assured by core areas connected to replacement stands that are managed under long rotation (160 years). Regeneration of young trees occurs in some replacement stands on an infrequent basis. Pine stands are generally not densely stocked (total basal area 50-80 square feet) and include many trees over 100 years old. Many trees are large (>20” dbh) and have a “flat topped” appearance. Old growth pine-grass forests and woodlands are fire-maintained communities characterized by relatively open conditions and a grassy understory. MA 21 may include pine in almost pure stands, pine mixed with oak and sometimes hickory, or even patches of relatively pure stands of post oak and blackjack oak. These forests and woodlands are characterized by open stands of old, large, and often widely spaced pines and oaks, occurring in patches and clumps. The forest floor supports a rich mix of grasses, forbs, wildflowers, and low shrubs.

Redheart disease, downed woody debris, and snags are common. Visitors encounter evidence of frequent, specific disturbance, particularly fire, in a naturally appearing landscape. While usually associated with management, disturbances are consistent with, and reflect, natural processes. Evidence of vegetation management is visible following thinning operations or infrequent reproduction cutting primarily in replacement stands. Access is from low-standard roads, many of which are closed seasonally or year-round. Fire scars and snags are visible in most areas, but the increased viewing depth, diversity of vegetation, abundance of wildflowers, and age and character of the trees contribute to scenic quality.

Pine-grass old growth provides habitat for a wide range of wildlife. Deer and other early-seral stage species are favored by the abundant grassy understory, while woodpeckers and other species associated with mature forests are supported by the mature-tree component. Species requiring cavities and snags (e.g., raptors, bluebirds, woodpeckers) are favored over those highly dependent on hard mast (e.g., squirrels) or dense brush (e.g., gray fox).

Disturbance Regime—These forests are maintained by frequent, moderately intense ground fires, some of which occur in the summer and fall (July-November). Fire return intervals range from one to more than four years, but occur on an irregular basis, at varying times, seasons, and intensities. Fires are frequent and hot enough to suppress the woody understory and occasionally kill individual overstory trees or small groups of trees.

Core Areas—At least ten percent of the suitable acres of each old growth restoration unit is designated as a "core area." The core area ages and is not subject to artificial regeneration. Initially, thinnings and midstory treatment may be necessary to establish pine-grass conditions. Fire is an important component to maintain such conditions.

Replacement Stands—The remainder of the pine stands within each old growth restoration unit are managed as replacement stands in order to perpetuate old growth conditions and maximize the effective area in old growth at any one time. Replacement stands range in age from very young to approximately 160 years. These replacement stands with extremely old trees are available to take the place of core areas that, for whatever reason, can no longer function as old growth. Replacement stands may be regenerated as necessary using irregular seedtree or irregular shelterwood reproduction cutting methods. These methods differ from traditional seedtree or shelterwood cutting in that some of the seedtrees are retained indefinitely. The result will be two-aged stands of trees. Replacement stands are suitable for timber production; in the course of managing for old growth objectives, significant yields of high-quality wood may be produced and sold from these areas. In some cases, desired stocking may be maintained by burning alone.

Regeneration—The periodic use of prescribed fire under open canopies may promote natural regeneration at irregular intervals, resulting in "banked" advanced reproduction in many core and replacement stands. Therefore, regeneration in some replacement stands may be accomplished simply by thinning to a seedtree or shelterwood residual basal area (BA), and excluding fire for a few years to ensure the survival of seedlings. With periodic burning, some regeneration will be of coppice origin. Hardwood Stands—Hardwood stands and inclusions are unsuitable for timber production and are managed to restore upland hardwood and oak-pine old growth. Fire is not excluded from these areas, although burns generally are less intense and less frequent.

MANAGEMENT AREA 22

Renewal of the Shortleaf Pine-Bluestem Grass Ecosystem and Red-cockaded Woodpecker Habitat

Management Area 22, an area for the renewal of the Shortleaf Pine-Bluestem Grass Ecosystem and Red-cockaded Woodpecker habitat, is located on National Forest land on the Poteau/Cold Springs, Mena, and Oklahoma Ranger Districts. These lands consist primarily of extensive blocks of Ouachita Pine-Oak Forest, Ouachita Pine-Oak Woodlands, and intermingled stands of Ouachita Dry-Mesic Oak Forest. In addition to providing extensive areas in which restoration of pine-bluestem ecosystems is featured, MA 22 incorporates two Habitat Management Areas (HMAs; one in Arkansas, one in Oklahoma) for the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCW).

Management Area 22 is available for oil and gas exploration and leasing with controlled surface use stipulations on the entire management area except for the Blue Moon Wildlife and Fisheries Demonstration Area, where no surface occupancy stipulations apply. MA 22 is suitable for livestock grazing subject to MA design criteria. Acres in this Management Area are both suitable and unsuitable for timber production. Active RCW stands, recruitment stands, and recruitment clusters are all unsuitable for timber production. As required by the 1995 Red-cockaded Woodpecker EIS, HMAs (MA 22a) have been designated. HMA acres are shown by Ranger District in the following tabulation:

Ranger Distric	Acres
Cold Springs	6,581
Mena	11,147
Poteau	66,584
Tiak	50,945
Total	135,257

The remaining part of MA 22 (entirely in Arkansas) is the Extended Area, or MA 22b. The Extended Area provides for renewal of the shortleaf pine-bluestem grass ecosystem and future expansion habitat for RCWs.

Desired Condition

The dominant natural plant community of this area is shortleaf pine trees with bluestem grasses and a variety of other herbaceous plants flourishing on the forest floor. Restoration of landscape patterns and functions—with special emphasis on renewing the historic role of fire and increasing the abundance of older pine and hardwood stands with grassy understories—are key features of this MA. Hardwood trees are more common in stream corridors and on some north-facing slopes in the area; they are also important components of all pine stands in the MA. Hardwood dominated areas will be less numerous in this MA than in others across the Forest, but will still comprise at least 20 percent of the area.

The Ouachita Mountains Red-cockaded Woodpecker Habitat Management Area (HMA) in Arkansas is designed to support a future population of at least 250 RCW breeding groups, as defined by the USFWS Recovery plan for a Secondary Core Population. This HMA has sufficient habitat capacity to provide for 400 active clusters; the smaller Oklahoma HMA has sufficient habitat capacity to provide for 50 active clusters. Active management of these HMAs should yield an approximate 5 percent annual population increase.

Visitors will see a large portion of the area featuring a fairly open canopy varying from approximately 60 square feet to 80 square feet of basal area per acre of older pine and hardwood trees. To develop and sustain older stands, regeneration cycles are a minimum of 120 years. Regeneration areas also retain a portion of the overstory indefinitely to reduce potential impacts from canopy fragmentation and to retain visual quality. In the future, those pine-dominated areas that would be committed to regeneration, i.e., the 0-10 year age class, will make up no more than 8.3 percent of the area. This MA has at least 66 percent of the acreage in trees older than 40 years, including 40 percent of the acreage in trees older than 70 years, and approximately 17 percent of the acreage in trees older than 100 years.

Fire is used to maintain a healthy functioning ecosystem. The forest floor in the burned areas contains a high number of herbaceous plant species, reptiles, small mammals, and breeding birds. Harvesting activities are planned to provide large blocks of older trees. Ecotonal differences are minimized by

limiting age differences between stands. Visitors may encounter disturbances to the forest in this area from prescribed fire and timber harvest activities. The disturbances are seasonal and short-term.

Revised Forest Plan Strategy

The Revised Plan also contains a set of *Program Priorities and Objectives*. The following is a summary of the relevant objectives that can be addressed, wholly or partially, through habitat improvement and fuels reduction prescribed burning in the project areas.

Overall Goal

Restoring and maintaining healthy and productive ecosystems, providing high-quality recreation opportunities, protecting air quality, and providing clean water, appealing scenery, forest products and economic opportunities to communities that rely upon this Forest are the highest priorities under the Revised Forest Plan.

Forest Health/Terrestrial, Riparian and Aquatic Communities/Wildlife and Fish Habitat (including Proposed, Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species Habitat)

- **Priority #3** – *Maintain or restore community diversity (USDA Forest Service, Part II, pg 58)*;
  - **Objective OBJ01** – *Increase prescribed fire to an average of 180,000 acres per year by 2011 to help achieve and maintain desired community conditions (USDA Forest Service, Part II, pg 59)*; Objective OBJ03 – *Move 5,000 acres into fire regime condition class I annually (USDA Forest Service, Part II, pg 59);*
  - **Objective OBJ04** – *Maintain or improve the population status of all species that are federally listed or proposed for listing when evaluated at 5-year intervals (USDA Forest Service, Part II, pg 59)* Objective OBJ07 – *Increase cumulative total area being restored to shortleaf pine-bluestem grass or shortleaf pine-oak woodland conditions to 350,000 acres by 2021(USDA Forest Service, Part II, pg 60).*

Fuels

- **Priority #1** – *Reduce fuel loads of National Forest System lands that have the greatest potential for catastrophic wildland fire (USDA Forest Service, Part II, pg 68).*
  - **Objective OBJ42** – *Treat the highest priority areas at a rate of 500 to 1,000 acres per year (USDA Forest Service, Part II, pg 69).*
  - **Objective OBJ43** – *Complete 50,000-100,000 acres per year of hazardous fuel reduction in the other moderate to high priority areas (USDA Forest Service, Part II, pg 69).*

Objectives Applicable to all Management Areas in the Project Area

The following bullet statements are specific to previously discussed MAs, but the objectives were not specifically stated in the desired condition description.

Desired Condition

- Maintain or restore terrestrial community diversity.
- Take steps to improve forest health.
- Use an integrated pest management approach to prevent or reduce damage to forest resources from pest organisms, including non-native, invasive species.
- Maintain or enhance designated beneficial uses of water.
- Maintain or improve long term soil productivity.
- Protect watershed functions by implementing standards that meet or exceed state best management practices guidelines.
- Minimize air pollution impacts to the Air Quality Related Values of the Class I Area, Caney Creek Wilderness.
- Provide abundant and diverse opportunities for enjoying scenery.
- Maintain or enhance the visual character of the Ouachita National Forest.
- Provide for an optimal, sustained yield of game animals.
- Contribute to the economic base of local communities.
- Restore ecosystem health in oak forests and woodlands affected by oak decline and other hardwood diseases, insect problems and drought.

Current Condition

- On average, an over abundant amount of vines, brush and understory trees exist due to the absence of recurring prescribed burning.
- Midstory and understory woody vegetation has overrun once open herbaceous forested stands.
- The Class I Area, Caney Creek Wilderness, is located approximately 10 air miles southeast of Mena, Arkansas.